have been seventeen years ago. We'd have to go to England, of course, to look it up."

"England?" she asked.

"Wasn't it from the Wadebridge vicarage that he stole you?"

"He said he took me from there," said Pamela thoughtfully; "but it was in another connection altogether that he spoke of having stolen me. I suppose you're right, that that is what he meant. The only thing that makes me doubt it is what I remembered the other day about Lincoln Park. I'm sure I felt that day as if I was with strangers. That's what I meant by saying I didn't remember Father as my father. I think the word 'father' meant to me another sort of man altogether then. Oh, I know I may be just making it up—without meaning to, of course. But don't you think it's worth a look in the Chicago papers first?"

He nodded. "That's worth trying, anyway. There isn't any mark on anything there, is there, that would tell where they were made or bought?"

She hadn't thought of that, and began by turning down the band of the hat. He reached over and took one of the little shoes from the box. In her preoccupation over the hat, she didn't see what he did with it at first. When she looked up he was holding it under the light.

"There's something here," he said, "stamped on the kid lining to the sole. But it's pretty well worn away."

He stopped looking for a moment just then; for she, coming up behind him to see too, had leaned over and laid her hands on his shoulders. The touch made him reel a little, made the letters dance under his eyes; so he shut them and steadied himself with a couple of long breaths.

She must have felt the sudden tension of his muscles; for she took her hands away, and for a moment a look of troubled wonder crossed her face.

He did not look round, but went on steadily making out the letters. "E—D and an O. That must be an M in between, and then an N and a T. Edmonton—oh, yes, and there's an O,—Edmonton, Ohio." With that he looked around at her.

"Is there such a place?" she asked.

"I don't know. You can telephone down to the office for a railway guide and find out. But I think there is. Somehow I seem to remember it."

"You remember it!" she echoed. "Then—"

"Oh, not from long ago," he said. "Praise God for that! It's something recent. I've seen it within just a little while."

He dropped back into the chair, and she settled down too and watched him.

"I saw it on a postmark," he said at last. "But I haven't had any letters—" And then he sat up and looked at her. "Why, wasn't one of the first answers to your advertisement from there? Wasn't it one of those letters that we got the day we went to the office together?"

She looked back at him in a sort of rueful surprise. "Do you know," she gasped, "I believe I never opened those letters at all! I forgot all about them, in the excitement of the other things we found out that day. They're—why, they're right here in my desk where I put them when I came in." After a moment's search at the desk. "You were right," she said. "Here it is—unopened." She held it out to him. "Read it to me, please."

IT contained only a single typewritten sentence across a sheet of plain paper:

The advertiser for bill of large denomination will possibly do well to communicate with Hiram K. Williams, Lock Box 272, Edmonton, Ohio, stating number and denomination of bill and address.

"He certainly doesn't tell much," John commented.

She turned it over thoughtfully in her mind for a minute. "Still, it sounds rather more genuine to me than the others, quite apart from the coincidence of its coming from Edmonton. He doesn't ask for an interview, nor say he is sure he has the right one; but the very fact that he says so little makes it almost seem as if he had something."

John nodded assent to that. "He has something, and he knows exactly what it is he wants. Probably it's nothing but to get rather more than his share of the value of the bill. But we don't know exactly what we want. At least, we want a lot besides money. If he has the other half, we want to know how he came by it and why it was divided."

"Still," said Pamela, "we can't do anything till we know the bill matches."

John had to admit that too. But he wasn't satisfied. "Why do you suppose he's so awfully cautious about it? Why didn't he tell us the number and denomination of his bill, unless, after we've told ours, he wanted to leave the way open to say it wasn't right, even if it was?"

"But then he wouldn't get the money."

"It may not be the money he wants, either. If it had been that, just a plain business transaction, why shouldn't he have told us the number and denomination?"

She hadn't any answer ready for that.

"Pamela," he asked presently, "may I see the bill—the ten-thousand-dollar one?"

She got it out of her handbag and gave it to him.

"Why," he said at his first glance at it, "that's queer!"

"What?"

"Why, you see it's quite a little less than half the bill. The owner of the other piece could redeem it for its full value; would have redeemed it, one would think, long ago. So why, unless it's for a personal reason, should he answer your advertisement?"

"It's probably another bill, then.'

But that didn't satisfy him. "It may be," he admitted; "but it would be an awfully long shot, considering the coincidence about Edmonton." Then he held the bill close under the reading lamp. "You haven't a magnifying glass, have you?" he asked.

She came and stood beside him. "No; but I have awfully good eyes."

He handed the precious fragment over to her. "Look at the rough edge," he said.

"Why," she exclaimed a moment later, "it wasn't torn! The other end was burnt off."

He nodded. "Burnt, or eaten with acid," he said.

"Well, then, there's no use answering this letter, is there? Because, if the other end was destroyed, this end isn't worth anything."

John didn't answer immediately, but took a thoughtful turn or two across the room first. At that he stopped and stood looking at her. "Not necessarily," he said. "If the bill was folded across the middle, and the folded edge got into the fire, or had acid spilled on it, and then was rescued just in time, then the other piece of the bill would be just like this. Neither of them would be worth anything separately; but together they'd be worth ten thousand dollars. I believe that's going to lead somewhere Pamela. Perhaps it's only because I hope it so much; but I really believe there's a chance in it."

WHY do you hope so much," asked Pamela after a long look at him,— "I mean, that this particular clue shall be the right one?"

He drew in a long breath and let it out again slowly before he answered. "Because I'm not in it," he said. "Because it's the first thing that's happened that doesn't bring me into it."

She took that with a little gasp of sheer incredulity. "But—but, don't you want to be in it? Hasn't it been —pleasant to you—to feel that there was something—holding us together? It has to me."

He smiled at her rather wistfully. "Pamela," he said, "how do you want this to turn out? Do you want it to be proved that we are—brother and sister?"

"I—I don't know," she said, and her look was still one of simple wonder. "Of course I never had a brother, and it has made me feel—oh, warm, and safe, and happy to think that you might turn out to be that, really. But—but I have always said to myself that even if you didn't, it wouldn't matter—wouldn't make any difference in your being—fond of me."

He turned away from her and walked to the window and stood there looking out at the rain-veiled darkness. After awhile, "Can't you see," he said raggedly, "that it will make the biggest difference there is in the world in—in the way I am fond of you, Pamela?"

She was looking at him now, wide-eyed, and the color in a series of waves was rising higher and higher in her face.

It was a minute or two before he spoke again, and all the while he stood there at the window looking out at nothing. "It's like your dearness not to know—not to understand the difference. I've seen how it was, really, and I haven't misunderstood, not once, any of your sweetness and confidence, and your daring to show in that lovely way of yours that you were fond of me. But I've been a coward, and maybe worse, to let you do it. But I kept saying to myself that it wasn't so—that it couldn't be so—that we—"

She had to prompt him there. "Were brother and sister, do you mean?"

"Yes. I've tried to make myself believe that it was nothing but a nightmare, just a perfectly uncanny series of coincidences. But that won't do. We've got to prove it one way or the other. And until we do—" Now he turned and faced her. "I just can't stand it, Pamela! I've got to go away from you—until we know—until I know whether I've a right to ask you to be my wife, or whether I've got to teach myself to think of you the other way. Until then the touch of your hands, the look in your eyes, the nearness and warmth and sweetness of you, are just—torture, Pamela! Do you understand now?"

Slowly, a step at a time, she had withdrawn from him, until, when he finished, the whole width of the room lay between them. She was trembling visibly, and the bright flush that had been in her face was gone. Her lips were quivering and her eyes were dim; but the eyes looked bravely into his and the lips spoke steadfastly enough.

"I don't want you to go," she said. "And, John, if—if you're not my—brother, and you want me to be your wife, I will. Isn't that—" She broke off. "Can't you—" she began again; but she stopped there too, and for a long moment of silence their eyes met. At last the tension of her body relaxed and she turned limply away.

"I see," she said. "Goodby, Dear. I'll—I'll write you a note in the morning to the hotel."

Without a word he took his cap and raincoat and went over to the door, opened it, and stood there a moment looking back at her.

"I think—I think I'm beginning to understand," she said.

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS

JOHN STANFIELD, a rich, virile young man from Oklahoma, was spending a few days at his mother's childhood home in a West England village, when he was strangely attracted to Pamela Harris, who was spending a few days there with her father, Jered Harris. A number of odd little coincidences drew the couple together.

Harris was an invalid, and was enlightening Pamela as to her own obscure childhood, and showing her some keepsakes, consisting of a peculiar looking stone and three torn pieces of money, when he fell back dead.

Pamela had only two thousand dollars, and departed for Chicago to unravel the mystery of her identity. Stanfield missed her, and at once left for Chicago to look her up.

On the way across she made friends with G. Grahame Ashley and his wife, a couple of doubtful characters, and after getting to Chicago suddenly left their automobile in a park. There she encountered John in an out-of-way corner. It seems that the "lucky" stone she found among her father's keepsakes was a diamond worth twenty thousand dollars, and the girl was frightened at Ashley's attempt to steal it, and invented an excuse to leave hiscar.

Stanfield had the other half of one of Pamela's bills, and they discovered that they had known each other in childhood.

CHAPTER X. Mrs. Ashley

PAMELA bought her ticket and her seat in the Pullman; then, having inquired if the train was ready and learned that she had ten minutes to wait, she had the porter carry her hand luggage to a seat in the corner of the waiting room near the telegraph office. "You may come and get it when it's time for the train," she said, and dismissed him.

She had an odd reason for choosing that corner. Whenever she had to wait alone in a railway station, whenever she found time heavy on her hands and wanted diversion, whenever, especially, she wanted to be kept from thinking about her own affairs or her own problems, she always sat within hearing of the chatter of the telegraph instruments. It was one of the odd resources her father had given her when he had spent one whole summer teaching her the Morse code. He must have been a pretty good telegrapher himself, she often reflected, because his "send" had been as fast as any she ever heard going over the wires. At all events, she could always understand, when she chose to listen, everything a telegraph sounder had to say.

This morning particularly she wanted to be saved from her own thoughts. She had done thinking enough, through the sleepless twelve hours that had intervened since John Stanfield, with that agonized "I can't stand it, Pamela!" on his lips, had left her alone in her sitting room last night.

She wasn't sure yet that the conclusion she had come to was right; but she knew that no more thinking could make her any surer. Certainly, when she had come to that conclusion, she hadn't dreamed how hard it would be to carry out; to write the little note that said no more than, "I'm going. I understand enough for that. I'll write in a few days. Don't worry. PAMELA." And then to pack her trunks in the gray of a rainy morning, and go away without another look into his face or another clasp of his big, strong hands!

The hardness of it made her own understanding much clearer. When she thought of that last look of his, and of the pain there had been in his voice, she wanted, with a longing that almost hurt, to cradle his head in her arms, and quiet and comfort the pain away. The easy, friendly caress, the pleasant companionship, that had characterized their days together wouldn't be enough for her now, any more than they were enough for him.

Brother and sister! She didn't know much about that relation. It varied a good deal, she supposed. On the average, it meant giving lots of good advice, and remembering birthdays, and taking an interest in one's nephews and nieces. But brothers and sisters married other people!

That was the thought that brought the full revelation with it. She smiled over it at first, with a little flash of contemptuous amusement for the absurdity. Imagine her marrying anyone else than John—or John than her? Oh, it was preposterous! What was it they were torturing themselves with, anyway? Nothing but a nightmare, an uncanny series of coincidences. She was Pamela Harris. She'd always been Pamela Harris. And he was John Stanfield. Two months ago they'd never even heard of each other. And why, on the strength of a torn thousand-dollar bill—

She pulled herself up short. That was the fight he had been waging all these days, while she had looked blindly on and never even remotely understood. She did understand now, fully. And he was right about it. The question had been raised, and it had got to be settled one way or the other. She saw now how dreadfully her calling him "Brother" must have rasped a raw nerve.

She flushed as she sat there in her corner, and her lips twisted into a wry smile. What an idiot he must have thought her, not to have understood! If only she could see him now—oh, only for half an hour, to tell him that she did understand at last! There was a telephone booth there not far away. She could call him up. Perhaps there'd be time for him to make the train, and he could ride down to Edmonton with her. There couldn't be much harm in that.

But she sat tight. She simply must stop thinking about him; until she was far enough away to be out of reach of such temptations, at any rate. And so she took to listening to the chatter of the telegraph instruments, just as she had meant to in the first place.

OVER under the bulletin board a noisy sounder on a railway wire was bringing in all sorts of uninteresting information from signal towers and despatchers' offices. But closer at hand, and much fainter, was a thin, steady trickle of personal messages from departing and arriving travelers, going through the quad.

From where Pamela sat she couldn't see the persons who came up to the desk to send these messages. It was part of the fun to guess what they must be like. Also, if one saw them, it made listening to what they had to say seem a little too much like eavesdropping.

The first word she heard, after she'd got her ear adjusted to the idiosyncrasy of the operator at the sending key—and it is just as personal and character-